



UPDATE

Due to the continuing presence of foot and mouth in Cumbria Appleby Archaeology Group has had a quiet summer. With closed footpaths and access to land limited we have not been able to hold our usual walks or carry out any fieldwork.

Readers of Current Archaeology will be aware of another crisis looming for amateur archaeology in particular. I refer to article 3 of the Valetta Convention which was signed by the Government in March this year. The aim of the Convention is to see the licensing of all archaeology in Britain in order that fieldwork activities are regulated and only carried out by approved archaeologists. Whilst there are positive reasons for licensing archaeological fieldwork, this would effectively ban all amateur projects and even put an end to programs like Time Team.

The Council for Independent Archaeology argues that the ban on independent archaeology would be a disaster for archaeology in Britain. Many important digs like Sutton Hoo and Wharfedale began as amateur projects.

For more information on the Valetta Convention and Article 3 see the latest edition of Current

Archaeology. Letters of support for the campaign to stop Article 3 are available from the CIA, 7 Lea Road, Ampthill, Bedford, MK45 2PR or see the internet: www.SOSarchaeology.com

In Cumbria great discoveries have been made in Carlisle at the Castle Green site. Members heard about the discovery of a metal working site near Carlisle Castle last November when Gerry Martin talked to the group. The excellent conditions of preservation have been proven recently with the discovery a rare example of a military shoulder guard consisting of iron scales held together with bronze wire. One building has been identified as an armorer's workshop belonging to the second century AD. Fragments of helmets were also discovered along with armour, spearheads and ballista balls and bolts.

Appleby Archaeology Group belongs to the Cumbria Local History Federation, an umbrella organization for local history groups in Cumbria. The CLHF Study Day and AGM is being held at Newton Rigg this year and includes talks on Village History, Village Trails, Oral History and a talk by Phil Dunn

called 'Walking with Historians'. It is being held on Saturday 22 September between 9.30 and 4.30. If you are interested in going contact Jill Wishart Tel. 01228 561143. Cost £10.

This edition of the newsletter includes a report on an excellent talk by Jamie Quartermain on prehistoric landscapes. Also included is an article by an Appleby Archaeology member, Nick Hirst on the history of woodlands in Cumbria. Nick has a degree in ecology and a particular interest in the history of the landscape. Articles are always welcome. Thankyou Nick for this one.

Martin Railton

ADDRESS CHANGE:

Please note that the address for correspondence to Appleby Archaeology Group is now:

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A SHORT HISTORY OF WOODLAND IN CUMBRIA by Nick Hirst

Although Cumbria is a rural county, most of the countryside is open fell or improved pasture and meadows, with woodland playing a minor role in the configuration of the landscape. However prior to the Bronze Age when the 'wildwood' was felled extensively, the county was covered in woodland that had existed since the last Ice Age. The undrained valley bottoms would be a tangle of alder and willow whilst the fell tops would be covered in scrubby birch-wood. Preserved birch trees can still be found in the peat on top of Great Dun Fell. Depending on the soil pH, ash or oak woodland would exist in the lower uplands linking the alder groves with the birch woods.

Trees such as; chestnut, sycamore, beech and all conifers except yew and perhaps scots pine were absent from this area until they were introduced many centuries later. Beech is only native south of Manchester and Scots pine north of Edinburgh. Sycamore was introduced probably in the 16th century and chestnut trees were brought here by the Romans (Rackham 1993).

Where limestone outcrops break the soils surface yew trees would grow and as these areas were difficult to cultivate many still remain, for example at Witherslack in south Cumbria. However where sheep graze, any young yews would be eaten and limestone pavement like that on Asby Scar would result.

The utilisation of bronze tools and the constant struggle to find grazing for stock resulted in many woodland clearances around 3700 BP. Pollen records show that at this time oak pollen fell from 20% to 5% at Seathwaite and heather and grasses

increased (Satchel 1989). The end of the Iron Age saw a big increase in agricultural activity and scrub woodland on Stainmore and the Howgills was cleared about 2050 BP (Harvey, Oldfield and Baron 1981).

Early in the 7th century Anglian settlers from the north east made the Eden Valley their home and felled many lowland trees for their buildings and grazing areas. The next big



clearances took place as viking invaders settled and started farming around 1000 AD. Sediment profiles in lowland lakes show a four-fold increase in soil washed off the ploughed hillsides between AD 900-1000.

By the 13th century Norman control of previously English estates brought about the designation of 'royal forests' such as Inglewood near Penrith and Copeland further

south. These areas were not necessarily densely wooded but they were protected by a stringent set of rules known as 'forest law'. It was the aim of forest law to protect any game there may have been to provide sport for the Norman nobility. Animals such as wolf and boar were still to be found in these areas and along with deer formed the quarry that the nobility were so keen to protect.

Private forests existed alongside royal forests and in many instances they were subject to the same laws. It was illegal to walk in a private forest with dogs or bow and arrows and without a licence one couldn't enclose land, build, hedge, ditch, drain or even collect firewood.

Timber was taken from royal forests in times of national emergency such as the supplying of 50 oaks to the Bishop of Carlisle from Inglewood forest to repair damage caused by marauding Scots (Satchel 1989).

By the middle of the 13th century income from cultivated land became more important than hunting and Calder Abbey was given rights to cut down branches in Copeland forest to feed to animals in winter. These branches were the winter food of the deer in the forest and as enclosure proceeded the deer gradually retreated and the boundaries of the forest shrank.

As early as the 12th century charcoal was burned for the smelting of iron in various parts of Cumbria. Trees such as ash, birch and small oaks maintained a constant supply of fuel, but by the 16th century the woodland had been devastated so much that Queen Elizabeth fined some charcoal burners at Hawk-

sheaf in an attempt to protect what woodland was left. At about this time managed coppicing was introduced. This technique allowed felled trees to regrow in small diameter poles or 'spring' from the remaining stumps. Large areas of woodland were set aside for rotational coppice management with some trees allowed to grow to maturity amongst the coppiced trees. These trees were usually oaks and known as 'maidens' or 'standards' they were kept for timber. The spring was allowed to grow for 8-10 years and then cut down for smelting, this process was repeated every 8-10 years and meant that charcoal burning did not have the devastating effects on the woodland of Cumbria that it had in previous centuries.

The demand for charcoal peaked in the 18th century and the practice of coppicing declined until recently where it is used for conservation purposes. Studies have shown that areas that are coppiced have a higher wildlife value than those that are not. The extra light falling on the woodland floor after coppicing allows more wild flowers to grow and many insects including moths and butterflies also benefit. These are food for many birds and some mammals higher up the food chain, resulting in a healthier ecosystem.

Although semi-natural ancient woodland is protected in some instances in the form of nature reserves, much can be found on steep sided valleys where agricultural 'improvement' is difficult. An example of this 'ghyll' woodland can be found on the steep banks of Great Rundale beck at Knock, and a good example of semi-natural ancient woodland can be found at Scalehow Wood east of Flakebridge. Both these examples are on private land and permission from the respective landowners should be sought before visiting them.

Nick Hirst

Prehistoric Upland Landscapes A Talk By Jamie Quartermain

Mr Jamie Quartermain from Lancaster University Archaeology Unit gave an interesting and informative talk on Prehistoric Upland Landscapes in the Lake District to the last meeting of the season of the Appleby Archaeology Group

He began by saying that 30-40 square kilometres of the Lake District have been surveyed and that this represents a small proportion of the area that could be explored. Areas rich in evidence of a prehistoric landscapes include the coast, the south west fells, Askam Fell, Caldbeck Fell, Shap and Haweswater. Between the Eden Valley and the M6 there is evidence of movement to the uplands such as at Crosby Ravensworth and around Kirby Stephen.

The survey work is now done by walking across the land using satellite positioning (GPS) to precisely locate monuments. Pollen analysis is a critical component of the survey work and provides information about vegetation and clues to the climate. Peat bogs and damp ground traps pollen and soil cores can be taken for pollen analysis. From the information archaeologists can identify the vegetation of the past going back to the last ice age. The nature of the vegetation also indicates the prevailing climate. 6000 years ago the climate was very poor but by 3000 years ago it was warmer and drier than to-day. It then slowly deteriorated throughout the Bronze Age with a rapid decline to colder wetter conditions in the Iron Age.

Neolithic sites (3500-2000BC) are predominantly found on the

coastline where land is good though many sites have been destroyed by subsequent human activity. Ehenside Tarn, drained in the 1950s revealed stone and wooden implements and at Bootle there is evidence of 4 henge monuments.

The significance of the Neolithic is that with the start of farming there was an explosion of technology after a 100,000 years when there had been very little change. Man began to take control of his environment, settlements developed, populations increased and there was time to develop artistic skills and produce monuments such as Castlerigg Circle. As the population increased demand for land grew and man moved to the marginal uplands.

The sequence of land use on the uplands appears to have been virgin forest, primary cairn fields and pasture, protofield systems, cairn field systems with mixed farming and lastly cultivated field system. Primary cairn fields started with land clearance and the depositing of unwanted stone to form many small cairns and pasture. It was suggested that each cairn may be the site of an ancient tree. There is no evidence of huts at this time. Prototype field systems appear with the evidence of some organisation of the land into fields for pasture, and hut circles appear. Cairn field systems are indicated by a more complex settlement with cultivated fields and pasture. Cairns are found in lines suggesting boundaries. In the last stage the fields are all cultivated, the settlements are complex with houses, stock enclosures and funerary monuments.

Mr Quartermain explained that establishing the chronology is difficult as there are few artefacts.

Some relationships can be deduced from funerary material, and these indicate that cairn fields and are Bronze Age (2000-600BC).

Iron age settlements are distinctive as they were enclosed with no associated field systems suggesting livestock herds were managed by those living in the enclosure. Enclosed settlements such as Shoulethwaite near Thirlmere, are rare in Cumbria where only 78 have been identified. They are more evident on the east side of the country and become large and defensive hill forts in the south.

The abandonment of the marginal land and the development of enclosed settlements suggest a time of stress and a need to defend the settlement. This decline coincides with the deterioration in the climate in the Iron Age and it is because the marginal upland land has not been cultivated since that the sites have been preserved.

Phyllis Rouston



AUTUMN EVENTS

MAPS, PLANS & DOCUMENTS

Cumbria Record Office, Kendal
Tuesday 2nd October 7.00pm

There will be a talk to the group at Kendal Record Office introducing the Maps, Plans and Records held there. There will be an opportunity to examine some of the records including maps of Appleby and the surrounding area.

Places are limited to 20 so please book in advance using the form provided.

STONE CIRCLES: THEIR GEOMETRY AND ALIGNMENTS

Appleby Grammar School
Tuesday 6th November 7.00pm

David Risk will be giving a talk to the group on the intriguing subject of stone circles and their possible alignments. The evidence for prehistoric measurement and geometry will also be examined including some Cumbrian examples.

ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE STAINMOOR PASS

Appleby Grammar School
Tuesday 4th December 7.00pm

Niall Hammond, the County Archaeologist for Durham, will be talking to the group about research carried out on the Stainmoor Pass near Brough. This includes evidence for prehistoric, roman and later occupation of an important route across the Pennines.

AGM AND MEMBER'S EVENING

Appleby Grammar School
Tuesday 15th January 6.30pm

The 2002 AGM will be followed by several short talks by Appleby Archaeology Group members. If you would like to give a talk to the group or share a favorite topic relating to archaeology or local history then please contact Martin to discuss it on 01768 88318 or approach me at a meeting.

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